

***Cochlearia officinalis* L.**

scurvey grass, spoonwort
Brassicaceae (Mustard Family)

Status: State Sensitive

Rank: G5S1S2

General Description: Fleshy biennial or perennial (possibly annual); several stems from decumbent to occasionally erect, 4-12 in. (10-30 cm) long; basal leaves in a rosette, the petiole slender, usually several times larger than the blade, the blade approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (10-20 mm) long, reniform to cordate-oblong or ovate, entire to sinuate; cauline leaves usually with larger blades, sessile or broadly short-petiolate, and generally dentate; flowers rather inconspicuous, borne in racemes, much elongated in fruit; sepals not saccate at the base; pedicels ascending, $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (5-15 mm) long; petals white, $\frac{1}{8}$ - $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (3-5 mm) long; stamens 6; style $\frac{1}{128}$ - $\frac{1}{32}$ in. ($\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ mm) long; fruit a silicle, non-stipate, oval to elliptic, inflated but some what compressed, valves prominently nerved; seeds many and biseriate.

Identification Tips: Petals are 3-5 mm long, pedicels are $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (5-15 mm), and both the silicles and the style are $\frac{3}{16}$ - $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (4-7 mm) long. *C. officinalis* is the only species in the genus *Cochlearia* known to occur in the Pacific Northwest.

Phenology: Plants flower from June through August.

Range: Circumboreal at high latitudes, occurring in the islands of the Bering Sea, the Arctic, Northern Europe, several Canadian provinces, Alaska, and the western United States. *C. officinalis* extends southward from Canada along the coast in northwestern Oregon and Washington. In Washington, it can be found in Clallam, Jefferson and Mason counties. Additionally, the species has been found historically in Grays Harbor County, Washington.

Habitat: *C. officinalis* is a maritime species found in crevices of rocky bluffs and sea stacks and in gravel and sand along tidal plains. Duff and dirt are often present in the cracks the species inhabits. Washington populations have been found above the high tide zone in rocky alluvium along creek beds, on bluffs in the salt and spray zone and near sea bird nesting areas on rocky cliffs whose bases are inundated by high tides.

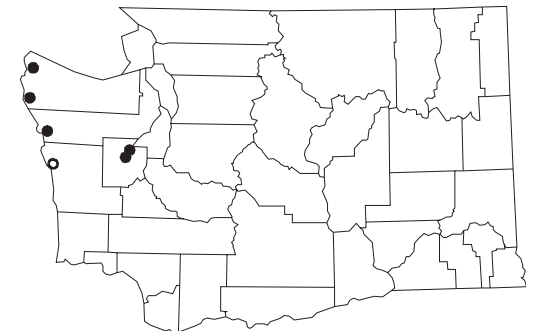
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Known distribution of
Cochlearia officinalis
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Ecology: The species is well adapted to thrive in a unique ecological niche. Its ability to grow and reproduce in a harsh environment enables the species to colonize areas where many other species may not survive.

State Status Comments: The limited range and number of populations in Washington are factors that contribute to the sensitive status of *C. officinalis*.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory in Washington is needed.

Threats and Management Concerns: Potential threats include plant collecting, the use of heavy equipment in shellfish harvesting, the creation of dikes, and the development of public beaches.

References:

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1964. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest Part 2: Salicaceae to Saxifragaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 597 pp.

Hitchcock, C.L. and A. Cronquist. 1973. *Flora of the Pacific Northwest*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 730 pp.